



Biography of Bettye J. Payne – Lt. Col (ret.) – U.S. Air Force

Bettye J. Payne is a native of Jackson, Mississippi and received her initial education through the public education system there. She is a graduate of the University of Illinois, Class of 1972, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminology. After one year of graduate school she decided to join the ranks of the military and attended the United States Air Force Officer Training School, Lackland AFB, Texas and received her commission in June 1973. Her initial training was as an Aircraft Maintenance Officer. For four years she supervised the maintenance of the F-100, F-105, F - 4, F-111, OV-10 aircraft as well as the CH-53 helicopter. In February 1977, Bettye was selected to be one of the first women to attend Undergraduate Navigation Training at Mather AFB, California and received her wings in October 1977.

Bettye spent the next nineteen years using her maintenance and operations experience to help the Air Force achieve its mission. She has served as a crewmember or instructor onboard the C-5, C-141, WC-135 and T-43 aircraft. In September 1983, she became the first female and youngest person to become a Headquarters Airlift Director managing airlift for the entire Department of Defense. Citing the need for positive role model for female cadets at the Air Force Academy, Bettye spent two years there as an Air Officer Commanding for one of the Cadet Squadrons. As the Chief of Safety for the Sacramento Air Logistics Center, she directed programs providing a safe and healthful work/living environment for over 25,000 military, civilian, and dependent personnel. Bettye took this expertise to the Air Force Safety Center where she was responsible for coordinating and evaluating the adequacy of corrective actions to resolve mishap recommendations.

Her decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters, and the Air Force Commendation Medal with three oak leaf clusters. She is a Senior Navigator with over 2000 flying hours and retired in 1996 from Kirtland AFB, New Mexico.

Bettye is a service connected disabled veteran business owner operating her own safety consulting small business. Payne Consulting Services provides world-class safety oriented training services to a myriad of governmental agencies and private companies. Her expertise is in the field of risk management, safety program development, aviation and ground safety. Bettye has been a member of the Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs for two years. Her interests are in the training and education of veteran entrepreneurs and government procurement personnel.